



About: Diplopedia

Diplopedia is an online encyclopedia of foreign affairs information. It is a wiki, a kind of Web site that can be edited with an Intranet Web browser. Subject to the principles and guidelines for Diplopedia, anyone who can access Diplopedia is invited and encouraged to contribute his or her experience, knowledge and expertise in the form of articles, discussion or editing of material submitted by others. It is fast becoming a reference and starting point for all topics of interest to the Department and U.S. Government (USG) foreign affairs community.

Principles for Governance

Ownership

The Office of eDiplomacy, Bureau of Information Resource Management, provides the underlying technology (MediaWiki, the basis for the popular Wikipedia on the Internet) and will oversee its operation and development. In a larger sense, however, Diplopedia belongs to all State Department personnel who contribute to it or use it.

Accountability

Unlike the public Wikipedia, where people can contribute anonymously, everyone who contributes articles, discussion or edits to Diplopedia will be identifiable by his or her email address. Thus, all contributors to Diplopedia will require a log-in.

Resolving Disputes

Occasionally, disputes may arise about content. In these cases, the Office of eDiplomacy will adjudicate by forming a panel of knowledgeable and neutral parties in the Department to review the situation. This effort will aim for articles to contain a fair characterization of opposing viewpoints. If necessary, the Director of eDiplomacy may decide to remove the content in question.

Principles for Articles

Neutral or Attributed Points of View

Diplopedia requires that all articles be written from a neutral point of view, i.e., one that fairly represents alternative views. Positions or views in an article that do not fairly represent the consensus of the relevant community of interest should be clearly marked with the author, office, or agency whose views they represent.

Non-Authoritativeness

Diplopedia articles are not "final products." Publishing on the wiki does not imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. Wiki articles may be part of the deliberative process. Material can be taken from Diplopedia and sent through the standard clearance process if an official product is desired.

Alternatively, Diplopedia may contain links to official documents. For example, Diplopedia might contain articles and discussion about human rights practices in a given country. It could even contain a "rolling version" of the relevant human rights report – but this should link to the official annual human rights report for that country.

Linking to Source Material

Links to source material must point to locations accessible via State's Intranet – all links to source material must work for all users of Diplopedia, that is, to sites on U.S. Government networks or the Internet.

Professionalism

Diplopedia is not a message board or a chat room. It is a reference tool for State Department personnel who seek quick access to knowledgeable, useful, timely, current information on foreign affairs issues. All contributors must keep their language, conduct and contributions professional, civil, and to the point.

Enduring Value

Generally speaking, individual articles should not be written about transitory matters – e.g., the itinerary for a Congressional Delegation – unless events will reach a magnitude that warrants an article. For example, local government elections in South Africa might best be covered in an article on "South African Elections." This article would cover various types of electoral processes and events in South Africa; the content would change often, reflecting both prospective and retrospective analysis. Since Diplopedia keeps every version of every article, it is easy to see a previous version. Following the enduring value guidance will prevent a proliferation of separate snapshot articles on a single subject.

Reliability

Information in Diplopedia must be reliable. Different perspectives, theories and arguments may be included in articles along with facts, but viewers must be able to check facts independently and to judge the reliability of sources for articles.

Ownership and Control

Diplopedia seeks to draw on the knowledge, experience and expertise of many people, whether they are currently working on a particular country, region or issue. As with its public and classified counterparts, the mechanism to achieve this is the ability of anyone to submit or edit content. Accordingly, when you contribute an article you are launching a process. You do not own or control it and must expect – and accept – that others will change it. This does not imply indifference but rather open-mindedness about the perspectives of others and the overall purpose of Diplopedia. If disputes arise, they can be resolved through discussion or mediation.